



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Turn it Down a Notch

National Protect Your Hearing Month — October 2016

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[Announcer] *This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Hearing loss is a common problem of getting older, but exposure to loud noises can affect people of *all* ages.

Dr. Yulia Carroll is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Environmental Health. She's joining us today to discuss ways to prevent hearing loss. Welcome to the show, Yulia.

[Dr. Carroll] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Yulia, how many people in the U.S. suffer from hearing loss?

[Dr. Carroll] One in five people over the age of 12 suffer from hearing loss. However, with age, hearing loss is much more common, affecting nearly half of those over the age of 60.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the main causes of hearing loss?

[Dr. Carroll] Well, earlier in life, causes are most often genetic, result of diseases, or certain infections. Among youth and adults, the most common cause is noise. Non-work-related hearing loss may be caused by loud noise from the environment. For example, listening to loud music from personal listening devices, concerts, clubs, sports events, and so on. When it comes to work-related hearing loss, 22 million workers are exposed to potentially damaging noise each year. Most of these are in the manufacturing sector, mining, and construction.

[Dr. Gaynes] Can hearing loss be restored?

[Dr. Carroll] No, unfortunately not. When it is lost it is permanent. It can result from a one-time exposure to a very loud sound, for example, single gunshot near your ear, a firecracker, or it can result from listening to loud sounds over and over again. Early damage may go unnoticed for a very long time, therefore, the goal is prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Give our listeners some strategies for protecting their hearing.

[Dr. Carroll] Best strategy is to avoid or leave loud places. If you cannot, then use hearing protection devices, such as ear plugs and ear muffs. And for those who love listening to music very loud in the car or at home, protect your ears, turn down the volume.

[Dr. Gaynes] How often should we get our hearing checked?

[Dr. Carroll] Well, children should have their hearing tested before they enter school or any time there is a concern about their hearing. Some common symptoms of hearing loss in a child are a delay in speech,

not clear speech, or often saying, “Huh?”. Adults with a history of loud noise exposure or whose family and friends think they have difficulty hearing should also be tested by an audiologist. Symptoms in adults include difficulty hearing high pitched sounds, such as those from birds and telephone; difficulty following a conversation in a noisy restaurant; and of course, turning up the TV or radio volume up or asking others to repeat what they said.

[Dr. Gaynes] Yulia, where can listeners get more information about preventing hearing loss?

[Dr. Carroll] They can go to cdc.gov and, in the search box, type “hearing loss.”

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Yulia. I’ve been talking today with CDC’s Dr. Yulia Carroll about way to prevent hearing loss. Use ear plugs in a noisy workplace and limit exposure to excessively loud events and environments to help prevent hearing loss at a young age and slow its progression as we get older. Regular screenings can also detect problems early.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.